

## Transcribed Excerpts from "Forest City-based Winnebago Industries turns 60" Newspaper Article, May 6, 2018

..."There's this rich spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship that seems to have grown up here fostered by our location and the people who have worked here," said Chad Reece, director of marketing at Winnebago.

In late 1957, citizens of Forest City contributed to a fund drive to start the new industry. Residents could invest money in \$100 increments.

The fund drive raised \$50,000, with 208 residents contributing.

Reece said this speaks to the "grass-roots" background of Winnebago, which has made it such an iconic brand.

Marlen Hanson was one of the original 12 employees who started work on Jan. 28, 1958.

He was just 18 and it was his first full-time job.

At that time jobs in the Forest City area "were not easy to come by," he said.

Although Winnebago only paid him \$1 an hour, which was the minimum wage at the time, he considered himself lucky...

Hanson said, "There was tremendous excitement in the community about opening the plant."

As the company grew, "it put a lot of people to work," he said...

In September 1964, a fire broke out at the plant. Rodberg remembers lots of local fire departments came to fight the blaze, but the wooden building was destroyed.

Work began that fall on what would become known as the north plant.

Rodberg said everyone worked together to make that happen because the community wanted to the company to succeed.

In the spring of 1965, Rodberg and the other employees went to work at the new building.

Winnebago built its first motor home the following year...

The company then started building 600 motor homes a week, he said.

The first Winnebago motor homes were 19-feet long. The company now is manufacturing 45-foot-long motor homes.

"And then Uncle Sam had my hand up and wanted me to join the Army," he said.

He was allowed to take a leave of absence so he could serve his tour in Vietnam. When he returned he was allowed to work in any department he wanted...

In the 1970s business really "blew up," according to Kearney.

"The buildings, they just kept popping up," he said.

Kearney said he's had good bosses over the years, including company founder John K. Hanson...